

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Mark Weatherstone, Assistant State Conservationist -Technical Services: 208-378-5720

Clint Evans, Assistant State Conservationist - Programs: 208-367-5703

**SPECIAL FUNDS AVAILABLE THROUGH USDA FOR
ORGANIC PRODUCERS**

Boise, ID, February 10, 2010 – Farmers involved in organic production may qualify for funds through the US Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement conservation practices related to organic agriculture. The Natural Resources Conservation Service will take applications for a special EQIP "Organic Initiative" until March 12.

"This is the second year for the organic initiative which provides financial assistance to encourage organic producers to adopt conservation practices that improve their operations," said Clint Evans, Idaho Assistant State Conservationist for programs. "The benefit of the organic initiative is that it allows eligible producers to compete for EQIP benefits separately from regular EQIP funding."

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to help implement practices that will conserve resources on private farm lands. Eligible producers include producers who are currently certified organic and producers transitioning to organic production systems.

"Producers can apply for financial assistance to help offset the costs of applying conservation practices to remedy existing environmental problems on their agriculture lands," Evans said. "Applicants will need to complete a screening worksheet for either Certified Organic operation or transitioning to organic production."

To be eligible for EQIP support for organic operations, the 2008 Farm Bill requires producers to develop and carry out an Organic System Plan. These plans must be approved and registered by the Idaho Department of Agriculture or a USDA accredited certifier. Applicants with certified organic operations must submit a copy of their current Organic System Plan.

"NRCS has over 290 conservation practices under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that can help organic producers," said Marlon Winger, the state agronomist with NRCS. "For example, planting cover crops to increase nitrogen in the soil or improving plant health through crop rotation or evaluating compost in nutrient management plans."

Winger added, "Producers can also take advantage of technical advice available from NRCS field offices. NRCS provides both financial and technical assistance to motivate producers to change or adapt practices to improve conservation on their operations."

For more information, potential applicants should contact the USDA Service Center in their local area. Visit the NRCS website at <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/> and click the link "Find a Service Center."

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Alexis Collins, State Public Affairs Specialist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Boise, Idaho
208.685.6978